DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 284 191 CS 008 888

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TITLE Sexism in Two Editions of a Primary Reading Series.
PUB DATE May 87
NOTE 50p.; M.A. Thesis, Kean College of New Jersey.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Dissertations/Theses - Master Theses (042)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Basal Reading; Characterization; Comparative Analysis; Evaluation Criteria; Grade 1; Grade 2; Grade 3; Primary Education; Reading Instruction; Reading Research; *Sex Bias; *Sex Stereotypes; *Textbook Bias; Textbook Content; *Textbook Evaluation; Textbook Research
IDENTIFIERS *Macmillan Reading Program Series

ABSTRACT

A study compared the 1975 and 1983 editions of the "Macmillan Reading Program Series" primary readers in order to examine sex role portrayals. It was hypothesized that the 1983 edition would show an increase in portrayals of non-sexist roles when compared with the 1975 edition. A checklist was constructed to record instances of sexism found in the 18 first, second, and third grade textbooks that were examined. Each story was read individually and analyzed according to the checklist. Results indicated that, although there was an increase in non-sexist role portrayals in the 1983 edition over the 1975 edition, the increase was not significant, and the hypothesis was barely supported. (Tables of data are included, and references, a section on related research, and several figures are appended.) (NKA)

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ED284191

# Sexism in Two Editions of a Primary Reading Series

by

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Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Master of Arts Degree

Kean College of New Jersey

May,1987

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ABSTRACT

This study involved the analysis of two editions, 1975 and 1983,of the Macmillan Reading Program at the primary level. It was hypothesized that the 1983 edition would show an increase in non-sexist role portrayals when compared to the 1975 edition. A total of eighteen textbooks were analyzed for sex-role stereotyping,nine from each edition.

An analysis of the results indicated that the 1983 edition of the Macmillan Program at the primary level did show an increase, however slight,in non-sexist role portrayals when compared to the 1975 edition of the Macmillan Reading Program.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper is dedicated to my brother,Michael George Garrity,whose creativity and humor have always brought joy to those fortunate enough to know him.

I would also like to thank Dr. Mazurkiewicz for his assistance throughout this project as well as his expertise as a reading scholar.

Thanks also are given to Dr.Putnam,Dr.Welle,Dr.Carmichael and Dr.Walters for their excellent instruction and dedication in the field of reading.

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The primary reader is one of the most influential teaching instruments that children will encounter in early classroom instruction. These early readers convey direct and indirect messages to children regarding their present and future roles in life. It would appear to be essential that these early readers be free from sexism and/or sex-role stereotyping. Children in the primary grades are at the outset of their educational experiences and deserve to have teaching materials that depict males and females as equals,with varied interests,occupations,roles and attributes.

Bordelon(April,1985)has reviewed various research studies that have been concerned with sexism in reading materials. She found that the 1972 NOW Study (which was largely responsible for informing the U.S. public of the pervasiveness of sexism in children's reading materials) offered the following data from an extensive study: boys and men were present in the readers in overwhelming numbers- the ratio of boy-centered stories to girl-centered stories was 5 to 2;the ratio of adult male characters to adult female characters was 3 to 1; male biographies to female biographies,6 to 1. Schulwitz (1976) also found

evidence of sexist writing in children's readers: limited roles for females,negative characteristics attributed to females,limited life or occupational goals for girls and women,and a prepondence of male characters.

It has been estimated that a child will spend approximately 10,000 classroom hours in school by the time he/she graduates from high school. With these figures in mind,it would appear that the role of sex-role stereotyping transmitted in school carries a great deal of weight. Adults are able to see and appreciate the power of printed materials; we often accept as truth that which appears in a bound textbook. From the perspective of a child,the impact of what is foumd in a textbook in print and illustrations can be fairly judged as a powerful influence on how they may perceive themselves.and others.

For nearly fifteen years the concept of sexism and sex-role stereotyping in children's readers has been debated and discussed in the U.S.. Educators,publishers and the general public have contributed to the discussion. It would appear that sexism in readers may damage both males and females in their development if they are chanelled into roles according to sex. Publishers have made the claim that

they have made revisions in their reading series' to reflect a more equitable portrayal of women and girls in reading selections. A continuing study, therefore, becomes imperative to determine how textbooks treat this area of concern. Of specific interest would be whether the 1983 edition of the Macmillan Reading Program Series r, for example, increased its portrayal of individuals in non-sexist roles at the primary level when compared to the 1975 edition of the same series.

Hypothesis

The 1983 edition of the Macmillan Series r Primary Readers will show an increase in portrayals of individuals in non-sexist roles when compared to the 1975 Macmillan Series r Primary Readers.

For the purposes of this study the following terms will be identified:

Primary Grades

The first, second and third grades.

Sexism

Discrimination on the basis of gender.

Sex-Role Stereotyping

Generalization which is not based

upon fact,but on inaccurate or partially inaccurate beliefs.

For the purposes of this research project it was assumed that sex-role stereotyping existed in prior editions than those cited.Also,that sex-role stereotyping existed to the same degree(for each edition) on those levels not examined.

PROCEDURES

A checklist(as shown in Figure I)was constructed by the researcher to record instances of sexism found in the basal readers in this study. The checklist was designed from several guidelines for non-sexist education:

State of New Jersey,Department of Education: Office of Equal Educational Opportunity. Checklist for Evaluating Textbooks,1975.

Training Institute for Sex Desegration. Textbook Analysis Worksheets. New Jersey: Douglas College,1977.

Women on Words and Images. Dick and Jane as Victims,Sex Stereotyping in Children's Readers: Guidelines for Non-sexist Education,Princeton,New Jersey,1975.

This checklist was the criterion used to analyze the basal readers used in this study. Eighteen textbooks were studied covering the first,second and third grade textbooks. Each story was read and examined for instances of sex-role stereotyping. The data was then recorded on the

checklist.

Nine of the basal textbooks used in this study were part of a seies entitled: Series r: The New Macmillan Reading Program,published by Macmillan. The remaining nine textbooks were part of a series entitled: Series r: Macmillan Reading. This series was also published by Macmillan Publishers.

Each story was read individually and a content analysis was made. A count and tabulation was made of the following: number of males and females as the central characters of the stories,in occupations,and in human qualities and characteristics,both positive and negative. A checklist containing the various categories was then completed for each book examined. Four totals were tallied for each male and female section: one for the main character of the stories,one for occupation shown,another total for positive attributes and a final total for negative qualities.

## RESULTS

The samples used in this study were as follows: Macmillan Reading Program,1975 edition; Grade One: Who Can, Lost and Found, Hats and Bears, Amigos/Ups and Downs, Colors/Being Me; Grade Two: Believe It/Feelings,Stand Tall

A Second LOok; Grade Three: Secret Spaces/Good News, Beginnings/Endings.A total of 69 stories from this edition were read and analyzed. Stories which contained animals or inanimate characters as principals were not included in this analysis. Expository selections were excluded as well.

The number of stories,as shown in Table I,which were male centered were thirty-five;the number of female centered were twenty-one.

Table I

COMPARISON OF STORIES READ,CENTRAL CHARACTERS, OCCUPATIONS,POSITIVE ATTRIBUTES AND NEGATIVE QUALITIES

| | 1975 | 1983 | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|
| I. Number of Stories Read | 69 | 78 | 147 |
| II. Central Characters | | | |
| Male | 35 | 36 | 71 |
| Female | 21 | 24 | 45 |
| III. Number of Occupations | | | |
| Male | 49 | 57 | 106 |
| Female | 18 | 32 | 50 |
| IV. Number of Positive Attributes | | | |
| Male | 51 | 56 | 107 |
| Female | 43 | 47 | 95 |
| V. Number of Negative Qualities | | | |
| Male | 23 | 20 | 43 |
| Female | 6 | 9 | 15 |

1975- The New Macmillan Reading Program
1983- The Macmillan Reading Program

The total number of occupations engaged in were sixty-seven; males were portrayed in forty-nine occupations compared to eighteen for females. In the area of positive attributes,males exhibited positive behavior fifty-one times. Females were observed in a positive manner forty-eight times. When negative qualities were tabulated the results showed twenty-three instances of negative male behavior and six instances of negative behavior exhibited by females.

Samples from the 1983 edition of the Macmillan Reading Program were also used in this study. The titles are as follows: Grade One: You Can,I Can,Too,We Can Read, Opening Doors,Rainbow World; Grade Two: Magic Times, Mirrors and Images; Grade Three: Secrets and Surprises, and Full Circle. A total of seventy-eight stories were read and analyzed. Stories which contained inanimate characters or animals as principals were not included in this analysis. Expository selections were excluded as well.

The number of stories which were male-centered were thirty-six,the number of female-centered stories was twenty-four. The total number of occupations depicted was eighty-nine,of which males numbered fifty-seven and females numbered thirty-two. In the category of positive

attributes,males were seen in fifty-six situations,females in forty-seven instances. In the category of negative qualities,males were portrayed negatively twenty times, females nine times.

As seen in Table I,there has been an increase in non-sexist role portrayals in the 1983 edition of the Macmillan Reading Program,at the primary level,when compared to the 1975 edition of the same series and level. However,the increase is not as great as the researcher had anticipated.

In Table II the comparisons are expressed in percentages. This table also includes the number of parental roles depicted as well as biographies.

TABLE II

COMPARISON OF CENTRAL CHARACTERS,OCCUPATIONS, POSITIVE ATTRIBUTES,NEGATIVE QUALITIES, PARENTAL ROLES AND BIOGRAPHIES

| | | 1975 | 1983 |
|---|---|---|---|
| I. | Central Characters | | |
| | Male | 63% | 60% |
| | Female | 37% | 40% |
| II. | Number of Occupations | | |
| | Male | 73% | 64% |
| | Female | 27% | 36% |
| III. | Number of Positive Attributes | | |
| | Male | 52% | 54% |
| | Female | 48% | 46% |
| IV. | Number of Negative Qualities | | |
| | Male | 79% | 69% |
| | Female | 21% | 31% |

TABLE II(cont'd.)

COMPARISON OF CENTRAL CHARACTERS,OCCUPATIONS, POSITIVE ATTRIBUTES,NEGATIVE QUALITIES, PARENTAL ROLES AND BIOGRAPHIES

| | | 1975 | 1983 |
|---|---|---|---|
| V. | Number in Parental Roles | | |
| | Males | 51% | 46% |
| | Females | 49% | 54% |
| VI. | Number of Biographies | | |
| | Male | 60% | 80% |
| | Female | 40% | 20% |

1975- The New Macmillan Reading Program
1983- The Macmillan Reading Program

From Table II one can see that females made slight to moderate increases in non-sexist portrayals in the 1983 edition when compared to 1975 edition in the following areas: central characters,number of occupations,negative qualities and parental roles. Females showed a decrease in non-sexist portrayals in the following areas: number of positive attributes and the number of biographies.

For males, the results indicated an increase in their representation in the 1983 edition in the following areas: positive attributes and the number of biographies. Decreases were noted for males in: central characters,number of occupations,negative qualities and parental roles.

## CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study appear to support the hypothesis that the 1983 edition of the Macmillan Reading Program at the primary level would show an increase in non-sexist role portrayal when compared to the 1975 edition, also at the primary level.

In the opinion of the researcher, however, the increase in non-sexist representation was a slight to moderate increase and not at the level anticipated by the researcher. This may be due to the fact that Macmillan undertook a major revision in their 1975 edition to remove sexism from their primary readers. Even if this is the case, there is still a need to further eliminate the sexism that is evident in both the 1975 and 1983 editions at the primary level.

On the positive side, it was apparent that the publisher did make attempts to portray a more equal representation of males and females in both editions. Although the 1983 edition increased the number of female central characters to 40%, this is still not reflective of the popula - tion at large where females comprise 51% of the population.

One of the largest increases for females was in the

area of the number of occupations portrayed by females. The 9% increase over the 1975 edition to 36% in the 1983 edition,again,does not reflect the reality of our society, where females account for nearly 50% of the workforce. Interestingly,when tabulating the occupations it was found that when individuals were engaged in non-traditional occupations,women were overwhelmingly depicted in this role(63% in 1975,77% in 1983). This appears to suggest to the publisher a need to portray males in a variety of roles and occupations,not only females.

The area of positive attributes evidenced one of the closest tabulations between males and females,with males gaining an increase of 2% in the 1983 edition to a 54% figure.

In the area of negative qualities,females saw their greatest increase over the 1975 edition. There was a gain of 10% to 31% in the 1983 edition in this area. This appears to be a dubious increase for females,but if females are to increase their representation in central characters and occupations,then varying personalities,both positive and negative will also be depicted. For males, it was a positive sign that they showed a decrease in this category. It should be noted that for males the highest

category contributing to the negative count was anger, which has often been perceived as a positive male trait in that it has been seen to convey an assertive,take charge personality. For females,the category which saw the highest tally for negative qualities was the one consisting of such traits as crying,frightened and timid. These traits, however,have traditionally been associated as negative female traits. The publisher should address this obvious example of negative stereotyping of both males and females.

In the area of parental roles the publisher is to be commended for portraying families with single and two-parent roles. In most cases the single parent was portrayed by a female,but in two selections which appeared in both editions,a single parent was depicted by a male,and in one the father was portrayed in a nurturing,non-traditional role.

The area that showed the largest decrease in female representation was biographies. There was a 20% drop from 40% in 1975 to 20% in the 1983 edition. This should be brought to the attention of the publisher,for it would appear to be essential that boys and girls at the primary level be exposed to biographical selections of both males and females.

Although not included in this study,the researcher noted that there was an increased representation of the disabled and the elderly in positive,productive roles in both editions.

It should be noted that this study was confined to the primary level of the 1975 and 1983 editions of the Macmillan Reading Program and that the analysis of other levels and editions may produce differing results.

In conclusion,the researcher believes that a sincere attempt has been made to remove sexism from the Macmillan Reading Program at the primary level in the 1983 edition. However,as the results indicate,there still remains areas that need further elimination of sexism in order to insure that girls and boys,men and women are portrayed fairly, equally and with dignity.

# SEXISM IN READING SERIES:

# RELATED RESEARCH

In a 1967 award winning novel a male character offers this advice to the heroine in the story," Accept the fact that this is a man's world and learn how to play the game gracefully." This has often been the message that has been transmitted to children in their reading materials.According to the Council on Interracial Books for Children, "Sexism is any attitude,action or institutional structure which subordinates or limits a person on the basis of sex." This definition applies to males as well as females.

In 1972 federal legislation was enacted to help address the inequities that were found concerning sex discrimination in education.Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 states that " no person shall on the basis of sex be excluded from participation in,be denied benefits of,or be subjected to discrimination under an education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." It seems unfortunate that it required federal law to promote sexual equality in education.

1972 was also the year that the first major examination of children's reading texts was undertaken ( Women on Words and Images,1972). One can easily see the powerful influence that content in basal readers may have upon children. The

roles portrayed,characteristics,attributes and traits of story characters are sending messages to our students on what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior for boys and girls, men and women. Since 1967 feminists have charged that elementary readers have presented few role models for girls as well as a picture of women that is often inaccurate, passive or negative(Fishman,1976).

Researchers have also voiced concern about the negative effects of sex-role stereotyping upon boys, "Traditional socialization practices encourage boys to develop aggressiveness,competiiveness and independence at the expense of of expressing a wide range of emotions or developing nurturing qualities."(Scott,1980).

The elimination of sexism and sex-role stereotyping in elementary readers should be the goal of educators, publishers and the general public in order to insure that all children are able to explore unrestricted possibilities in their lives.

The research that has been conducted concerning sexism or sex-role stereotyping has examined four major areas: 1) the proportion of male to female representation as major characters,2) the career or or occupational roles portrayed by males and females, 3) the attributes assigned to male

and female characters and 4) the effect that traditional and non-traditional characters have upon students'reading comprehension.

Many reading texts that have been used in the U.S. have implied that being a girl is somewhat inferior," In these texts boys are often portrayed as involved in a variety of activities,playing baseball,doing magic tricks, working with science equipment. In contrast,girls are shown helping with the housework,baking cookies and often simply sitting and watching their brothers."(Sadker & Sadker,1972). This quote coincides in timing with the first major study regarding sexism in children's reading texts. In 1972 a Task Force of the National Organization of Women made the U.S. public aware of sex-role stereotyping in children's readers. This study was conducted over two years with 134 books examined from twelve publishers. The total number of stories examined were 2,760. The major findings in this study were: boys and men were present in overwhelmingly larger numbers than girls and women. The ratio of boy-centered stories to girl-centered stories was 5:2; adult male characters to adult female characters,3:1; male biographies to female biographies,6;1; male animal stories to female animal stories,2:1 and male folk or fantasies to

female folk or fantasies 4:1. Clever girls were shown 33 times compared to 131 times for clever boys; girls solved problems 49 times,boys 169 times. Adventuresome,imaginative boys appeared 216 times,girls 68 times; passive dependent females appeared 119 times,males 19 times. The achievements of males were frequently shown,females'accomplishments were rarely depicted (Women on Words and Images,1972). Also noted in this study was that women who succeeded in non-traditional roles were somehow different from other women. From this initial study,the U.S. public was made aware of the pervasiveness of sexism,intentional or not,found in children's reading texts.

Graebner(1972) examined two editions of Scott Foresman (1962-63 & 1971) and two editions of Ginn & Company(1961 & 1969). Graebner hypothesized that since the roles of women had changed in the 1962-1972 decade,the newer children's readers,when compared to the older,would reflect that change in text and illustrations. However,after examining 554 stories in these texts,Graebner found "...school readers have not kept pace with a changing society. The role of women...has changed very little over the past decade." Among the findings from Graebner's study were: boys

dominated the story texts and pictures in the new editions as well as the old; boys are shown slightly more passive, but girls were shown as losing ground in active roles. One major change from the old to new readers was that "mother" was wearing an apron less frequently. The greatest difference between the new and old editions was the number of occupations for females. Women were shown in only five occupations in the old books and in 26 in the new editions. The study also found that boys dominated the story text and pictures in the new edition as well as the old ( as major characters in stories-old,71.1%, in the new,75%; in illustrations-old 58.1%, in the new 67.5%). Graebner also found that the newer editions continued to give unrealistic portrayals of women.

Frasher and Frasher(1972) conducted a study of readiness and grade one and two reading texts. They hypothesized that sex-role behavior is culturally determined and is produced by social learning. They examined early reading materials from 4 major basal series for:main characters,adult occupations,adult roles in the family and children's activities. The results showed: male characters were found 3:1 in comparison to females. In adult roles,females were shown in only 7% of the labor force(in reality,at that time

they were 37%); men were shown in a variety of jobs,58; women in 11. In the family, the father almost always assumed the leadership role; mothers rarely solved problems, were seen as ineffectual and were seen to turn to father or the eldest son when in trouble. Children's activities and play in the early readers showed that girls were depicted as quiet and passive,boys,as active and aggressive. The authors found a great deal of sex-role stereotyping in readiness and first and second grade readers. The model offered for females was one of few activities and few occupations. The authors believed the results to be shocking when one considers that the public schools are mandated by law to give equal education to all its children,both girls and boys.

Reading preferences have been mentioned in the literature concerning sex-role portrayals. Tibbetts(1974) raised the point that perhaps boys and girls have different reading preferences because they have been trained to do so by society,not because of any innate condition. For those who contend that boys have an aversion to reading anything to do with girls,Tibbetts counters with the findings that show girls do not have this aversion to boy related stories. She

suggests that girls may read boys stories out of a desire to identify with superior individuals,"...the propensity of girls to accept boys' stories casts doubt upon the assertion that sex difference in reading preferences are of paramount importance...social pressures and training may be the most significant factor behind observed sex differences." (Tibbetts,1974).

Graebner(1972) suggests that the reason boys don't read girls'stories may be because girl characters are very often dull,not simply because they are about girls. This reasoning appears to be supported by a study conducted by Frasher(1977). Frasher read the story of Pippi Longstocking, an outspoken,clever,adventuresome 9 year old girl,to 31 third graders(13 boys and 18 girls). After reading the story she questioned the students for their reactions. Her results showed,as expected,that the girls chose Pippi as their favorite character,and an equal number of girls chose Pippi as the one they identified with. The boys responses were somewhat surprising. They chose Pippi as their favorite character by a wide margin,and two even said they identified with her,rather than with Tommy,a character who fits the traditional boy role. This would appear to show that boys will show interest in girls' stories if those characters

are shown to be interesting and attractive.Frasher,however, pointed out that this st dy was concerned with a fantasy character,and boys might respond differently to realistic female characters.

Another area that has been studied by researchers in the field of sexism has been the impact on comprehension by traditional and non-traditional role portrayals. Frasher (1978) suggested that since high interest stories produce greater comprehension( and girls have been known to learn from high or low interest materials) the rationale for having sex-biased materials in favor of males is to provide high interest materials for boys,who,they believe need these types of materials in order to obtain good comprehension. The authors state that by using this approach far greater damage is done to girls.

In their study Frasher and Frasher tried to determine: 1) Do contemporary students prefer traditional or non-traditional roles? 2) Do boys and girls differ in choices? and 3) Is comprehension affected by the sex typed nature of the materials? The results showed that boys were equally interested in non-traditional and traditional roles,but they performed better in comprehension with the non-traditional stories. With girls it was found that the non-

traditional roles produced both higher interest and higher comprehension. From the results of this study the authors believe it has been shown that boys can enjoy and comprehend stories with non-traditional roles.

Kingston and Lovelace(1979) conducted a study to determine how first graders perceived males and females in illustrations and in reading texts. Their results showed that first graders saw males as larger(taller and wider) than females even when the male was in a non-traditional role,and the frmale was the main character in a non-traditional role. The authors feel the results seem to support the view that sex-role stereotypes develop in children before they enter school.

However, in 1982 Shower duplicated Kingston and Lovelace's study with sixth graders to determine if students who have been exposed to text and illustrations for five years continue to hold sex-role stereotypes. The findings did not concur with Kingston and Lovelace. These children took into account the role rather than the sex of the character. Shower concluded that sixth graders did not necessarily perceive males and females in sex-role stereotypes.

Scott,Summers and Feldman(1979) undertook a study to

see the effects of portraying a female main character in a traditional male role. The study involved third and fourth boys and girls,and was attempting to determine their perceptions of sex-roles,as well as overall story evaluations. The results of their findings indicated that when females were presented in non-traditional roles it increased the children's perception of the number of girls who could perform those specific activities,but not other non-traditional activities.not mentioned. The results also indicated females in non-traditional activities were rated as favorably as males involved in the same activities. The authors concluded that reading materials that portrays females in non-traditional ways will not be negatively evaluated by boys or girls. The authors also suggest that boys will enjoy stories about girls as long as they are portrayed in activities that are interesting and appealing.

Klein(1979)also studied the effects of non-sexist content in reading upon the comprehension of boys and girls. Klein used 23 boys and 23 girls from fifth and sixth grades. They were given two sets of stories,one set contained three airplane stories,the other consisted of three stories with females as main characters. After reading the selections the students were given comprehension questions. The

results indicated that each sex benefited from reading sex-appropriate content; the girls gained more from reading the female main character stories than they did from the airplane stories. Klein also suggests that " girls appear to learn as much as boys do when reading what boys like,but this is not the case for boys reading girls content." A consideration should be noted here. Klein did not indicate if the three female stories were traditional or non-traditional in nature. This may have had an influence on the interest value with the subjects who were boys. Klein's overall conclusion was that perhaps students should use sex-neutral materials or even separate reading materials for each sex,to insure that content will be enjoyed by both sexes.

As the U.S. public has become aware of the reality of sexism and sex-role stereotyping in children's readers, publishers have acknowledged that the problem has existed. In an effort to remove sex bias from their publications the publishers haveissued guidelines to help eliminate sex bias in their reading materials.

Britton and Lumpkin(1977)in their research found that merely by acknowledging that sex bias had been present in their reading materials,publishers had not solved the

problem. In their study the authors inform us that the major publishers (Ginn and Co.,Macmillan,McGraw Hill,Holt Rhinehart and Winston,Scott Foresman) have all issued guidelines to eliminate sexism and sex-role stereotyping in their textbooks. To see if the publishers had actually done what their guidelines pronounced,the authors compared 49 basals. The basals were separated into two groups,those published from 1958-1970,the pre-guideline basals,and those published from 1974-1976,the post-guideline basals. The authors contend that the guidelines appeared in the early to mid seventies. The major findings from their study indicated that: there was an actual increase in males as main characters in the new basals to 61%(old 60%),an increase of females as main characters in the new books to 16%. The authors contend that a great disparity still exists between male/female representation in the new textbooks despite the guidelines. They also suggest that the publishers have seemed more motivated to publish guidelines on eliminating sex-role stereotyping than actually taking specific steps to eliminate the bias.

Scott(1981)has also examined basals since the publishers guidelines were issued in the mid seventies. Scott examined two basals,both published in 1978,Pathfinder by

Allyn and Bacon,and Basics in Reading by Scott Foresman. Scott hypothesized that the publishers had not been given sufficient time to revise their readers which had been evaluated by Britton and Lumpkin(1977). From her examination of the two 1978 basals Scott's major findings were: females as main characters had increased to 31%,nearly one third of all main characters; the proportion of male characters,38% was still high,but more realistic than in past series. Scott also noted that traditional roles were still prevalent,39%,with non-traditional roles at 29%. A significant finding related to the sex portrayals in roles saw that 76% of those in traditional roles were males,while 70% of those in non-traditional roles were females. Scott believes that boys are still being unfairly stereotyped. This may be because the first area that was addressed in eliminating sex bias in reading materials focused on improving the portrayals of girls and women. Scott believes that sexism can be very harmful to boys. " These ideas have been stated in publishers' guidelines: that male story characters should reflect the full dimension of male role behavior,including the ability to express emotions and the desire to participate in traditional female activities."

There has been some criticism regarding the lack of progress in eliminating sexism and sex-role stereotyping in reading texts,especially since publishers' guidelines have been available since the early to mid seventies. In a study conducted in 1981,(Rupley,Garcia and Longnion) it has been asserted that this may be an unfair judgement. In the view of the authors,when the guidelines appeared in the early to mid seventies most basals were already in the process of being constructed," A text with a 1976 copyright was most likely begun in the early seventies,a period when equal treatment of both sexes in children's reading materials was not a pervasive issue." The authors in this study compared four sets of 1976 basals with four sets of 1978 basals. They also examined five sets of supplementary materials published in 1977 and 1978 with supplementary materials published in 1974-1976. The basals and supplementary materials were analyzed separately. The authors found that there was a real effort by the publishers to eliminate inequity of the sexes in basal readers. Their findings showed that there was an almost equal number of females as males(24% female-26% male-50% other).However, in the supplementary material there was not the improvement seen as in the basal material. In these books males were por-

trayed twice as often as females,and the overall difference between the early materials and the newer ones was very minimal. A reason offered by the authors for this discrepancy between the improvement in the basals and the lack of such in the supplementary was that perhaps the publishers were considering the fact that these materials are frequently used by remedial students,of which the greater number are boys. The authors suggest that publishers re-examine their supplementary materials for sexism,that researchers consider the copyright of basals when examining for sexism and they not compare basals with supplementary materials in their evaluations.

In contrast, a study conducted in 1983 by Britton and Lumpkin found that six major basal reading series(Addison Wesley 1982,Ginn 1982,Ginn 1980,Houghton Mifflin 1981, Macmillan 1980,Lippincott 1981 and ScottForesman 1981) when examined for main characters and role models,had not made significant progress in eliminating sex-role stereotyping in children's readers. Some key findings of the study were: as main characters males were depicted 35%, females 20%,equally 20% and others 35%. Britton and Lumpkin assert that this representation of women does not reflect reality,where females make up 51,4% of the population.

The authors also took a careful look at careers and roles portrayed by characters. They found that careers were depicted as follows: 64% assigned to Anglo males,14% to to Anglo females, 17% to males to males of color and 5% to females of color. The authors did not include stay-at home mothers as careers since the U.S. Census Bureau does not recognize that category. In summary,Britton and Lumpkin's study indicates that there has been increased numerical representation for women,but very little progress in role models for females in children's reading texts.

There has been some concern over the lack of scientific procedures used by researchers in the examination of sex bias in basal readers. Tibbetts(1978) acknowledges that there has been a great deal of literature on the subject of sexism in children's reading materials. She voices concern,however,on how the findings were obtained," Without concrete,objective evidence of the effects of sexist material on children,critics cannot go on indefinitely claiming that the material is damaging,nor can they expect that their accusations will be taken seriously by the scientific community." Tibbetts,however,acknowledges that the lack of scientific evidence does not mean that sexism is not harmful,only that investigators have not developed

accurate instruments to evaluate the data scientifically.

Tibbetts,again in 1979,addressed the issue of measuring sexism in reading materials,.She undertook a study which examined 5 major studies done on sexism. These studies were considered very influential and have generally been held in high regard. The studies examined were: 1) a study of reading textbooks,Dick and Jane as Victims(Women on Words and Images,1972); 2) and 3) studies of reading texts(Britton,1973;1975); 4)a study of picture books (Weitzman,Eifler,Hokada,& Ross,1972); 5) a study of science, reading,math,spelling and social studies textbooks (Weitzman & Rizzo,1974). In her review of these five reputed studies,Tibbetts claimed that they did not use the same standardized categories. She felt that the researchers should have made use of categories such as those suggested by Holsti,namely,criteria as: a clear definition,standardization,mutual exclusivity and derivation from a single classification principle. From her examination of the five studies(1979,p.39) it read "Based on the foregoing examination of highly reputed studies,it seems reasonable to conclude that studies of sexism in children's reading materials...should be closely scrutinized to determine if the results were based upon sound,well structured research

designs. The sort of loose,haphazard,subjective approaches to the study of sexism reported here,with their ill-defined non-standardized categories are unreliable. While such investigations may provide food for thought,they provide no substantial basis for scientifically valid conclusions."

Although each study had several inadequacies,according to the criteria suggested by Tibbetts,all were found lacking in: no categories given and no criteria given for the study. Because of the above criticisms, Tibbetts believes that replication is not possible for the studies cited.

What do the New Right,NOW,the Moral Majority,National Council of Teachers of English,Interracial Books for children,NAACP and feminists have in common? They all have been involved in the battle over what should or should not be represented in children's readers and children's literature(Britton,Lumpkin and Britton,1984). The scrutiny that has been given to children's books suggests that many view these texts as a powerful force for forming attitudes and behaviors. The authors chose to evaluate basal readers which were published between 1958 and 1982 in order to determine what types of attitudes were being transmitted in these texts. The basals were divided into five time

periods: 1958-1970,1971-1973,1974-1976,1977-1979 and 1980-1982. The major findings revealed: the proportion of females rose from 14% to 20% as main characters over the time span; the male proportion of main characters decreased from 58% to 35% over this time period. Although the representation of females improved over the 24 years studied, the career roles offered in the basal reders did not improve for women. Anglo males were shown in 64% of textbook careers,Anglo females were shown in only 14% of careers. After the results of their study were compiled,the authors chose to relate their findings, "We have asked publishers to expand the roles of the under represented Americans,to update the career choices for today and to use accurate information to project relistic career choices,families and individuals of the future."

Although it seems apparent that most publishers have made attempts to eliminate sexism in reading materials with female representation,the portrayal of male characters has not changed significantly. According to Scott (1980)"Boys continue to be portrayed as strong and silent, engaged primarily in activities stereotypically associated with males,such as spotrs,adventure and leadership." She commends the publishers for the improvements made in two

key ways,first the published guidelines for editors,authors and illustrators to eliminate sexism in their texts and the actual reduction of sex role bias in children's readers. HOwever,Scott feels that boys are often held to a higher standard to adhere to in relation to traditional roles, "Girls can now do "anything" (and everything) but boys should maintain power and dominance at all costs." Scott believes that boys and men should be portrayed in nurturing and expressive roles as well as active and independent ones. She also maintains that there is research that indicates when boys are presented with males in non-traditional roles ,"...their attitudes can be positively affected without a loss of reading interest or comprehension."

From the review of the literature on sexism,it can be seen that it has been present in children's reading texts, but through an ongoing awareness,positive steps have been taken to eliminate this bias. It was also shown that reading comprehension was often increased after exposure to non-traditional characters. In contrast to previous research,it was observed that boys could enjoy stories about female characters,as long as they were interesting and appealing. Although the research has raised the issue

of unrealistic procedures being employed when examining texts for sexism,this does not suggest that sexism isn't present. Researchers must construct scientific methods and procedures to insure that materials are being examined objectively. Finally,the focus of sexism should also include the portrayals of men and boys in a wide range of roles and emotions.

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# APPENDIX

FIGURE I

CHECKLIST OF BASAL READERS

Book Title: _____

Copyright Date: _____ Publisher: _____

Grade Level: _____ Number of Stories: _____

Number of Pages: _____

| | MALE | Female |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Central Character | ____ | ____ |
| 2. Number of adults shown in traditional roles. | ____ | ____ |
| 3. Number of adults shown in non-traditional roles. | ____ | ____ |
| 4. Number of adults who are depicted in a parental role | ____ | ____ |
| 5. Number of biographies | ____ | ____ |
| 6. Number of times children/adults are depicted as: | ____ | ____ |
| a) expressing emotion | ____ | ____ |
| b) active or adventurous | ____ | ____ |
| c) intelligent | ____ | ____ |
| d) sensitive or gentle | ____ | ____ |
| e) brave | ____ | ____ |
| f) recepients of recognition | ____ | ____ |
| g) crying, frightened or timid | ____ | ____ |
| h) angry | ____ | ____ |
| i) stupid, selfish or the butt of a joke | ____ | ____ |

TOTALS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Central character | ____ | ____ |
| Occupations | ____ | ____ |
| Positive attributes | ____ | ____ |
| Negative qualities | ____ | ____ |

FIGURE II

DATA GATHERED FROM CHECKLISTS

OF BASAL READERS

MACMILLAN 1975 EDITION

1. Central Character
2. Number of adults shown in traditional roles
3. Number of adults shown in non-traditional roles
4. Number of adults who are depicted in a parental role
5. Number of biographies
6. Number of times children/adults are depicted as:
   (a) expressing emotion
   (b) active or adventuresome
   (c) intelligent
   (d) sensitive or gentle
   (e) brave
   (f) recepients of recognition
   (g) crying, frightened or timid
   (h) angry
   (i) stupid, selfish or the butt of a joke

| | Who Can | | Lost and Found | | Hats and Bears | | Angry Sad Happy | | Colors Being Me | | Feeling Feelings | | Stand Tall Stand Up | | Street Space Small Large | | Beginning Endings | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 1 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 3 |
| | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 15 | 2 | 14 | 1 |
| | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 8 |
| | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | 0 | 0 | | | | | 3 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| | 1 | 1 | 1 | 11 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 |
| TOTALS | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Central character | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 1 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 3 |
| Occupations | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 15 | 2 | 15 | 3 |
| Positive attributes | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 2 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 6 | 11 | 15 | 11 | 6 |
| Negative qualities | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 1 |
| Number of stories | 6 | | 4 | | 2 | | 8 | | 8 | | 11 | | 9 | | 9 | | 12 | |

FIGURE III

DATA GATHERED FROM CHECKLISTS

OF BASAL READERS

MACMILLAN 1983 EDITION

1. Central character
2. Number of adults shown in traditional roles
3. Number of adults shown in non-traditional roles
4. Number of adults who are depicted in a parental role
5. Number of biographies
6. Number of times children/adults are depicted as:
   (a) expressing emotion
   (b) active or adventurous
   (c) intelligent
   (d) sensitive or gentle
   (e) brave
   (f) recepients of recognition
   (g) crying, frightened or timid
   (h) angry
   (i) stupid, selfish or the butt of a joke

| | You Can | | I Can Too | | We Can Read | | Opening Doors | | Rainbow World | | Magic Times | | Hints + Images | | Cheers + Shares | | Fair Play | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| 1. | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 7 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 5 |
| 2. | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 15 | 4 | 13 | 4 |
| 3. | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| 4. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 9 | 9 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 9 | 4 | 8 |
| 5. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| 6. (a) | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| (b) | 3 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 0 |
| (c) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| (d) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| (e) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| (f) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| (g) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| (h) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| (i) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| TOTALS | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Central character | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 8 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 5 |
| Occupations | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 16 | 6 | 14 | 8 |
| Positive attributes | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 6 | 10 | 2 | 10 | 7 | 5 | 9 | 9 | 19 | 10 | 10 |
| Negative qualities | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 0 |
| Number of stories | 5 | | 4 | | 5 | | 10 | | 12 | | 16 | | 15 | | 12 | | 15 | |